



# THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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NEW YORK, OCTOBER 11, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

## THE LIBERTY BOYS IN A SNARE;

OR, ALMOST TRAPPED.

By HARRY MOORE.



The sharp command of the redcoat leader was heard: "Fire!" Down upon the sidewalk on their faces went the youths. At the same instant the sound of pistol-shots rose on the air.



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## CHAPTER I.

### IN THE WILDERNESS.

"Do you have any idea where we are, Dick?"

"Yes, Bob."

"Where?"

"In Virginia."

"Humph! I knew that much myself. I meant, do you know whereabouts in Virginia we are?"

"No, Bob; save that we are in the depths of about as heavy a bit of timber as I have ever seen."

"You're right about that. I didn't know they had such timber down here."

"Oh, there's lots of timber in Virginia, and North and South Carolina."

"I believe you."

Two youths, of perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age, sat on horseback in the midst of a deep forest in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, not far from the point where the James River flows downward toward the sea. The youths were sunbrowned, but handsome young fellows.

Young as they were, they were veterans of the Revolutionary War.

They had organized a company of youths like themselves, in 1776, and had joined the patriot army.

The company of youths had done grand work for the cause.

The youths were known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick Slater was the captain of the company.

Bob Estabrook was his dearest friend and chum.

They were usually together.

They had made themselves famous as spies and scouts.

They had done so much and such good work in this line that General Washington had the utmost confidence in them, and in their ability to do work of the most difficult character.

They were down in Virginia now, on a dangerous errand.

They were searching for Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox."

They had a message for him from the commander-in-chief.

They had been instructed to look for him in the wildernesses of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and they were now engaged in the task set them.

Marion, with his little band of patriots, was here to-day, there to-morrow, and was an exceedingly difficult man to find.

He was like the Dutchman's flea—when one thought he had his finger on him, he wasn't there.

Dick and Bob, the "Liberty Boys," were mounted on splendid horses.

Dick's horse was named "Major," and he was a magnificent animal.

Dick had captured the horse from the British in 1776, on Long Island, and had had him ever since.

Bob's animal was scarcely inferior to Dick's.

The youths rode onward for some minutes.

They went slowly.

They could not do otherwise.

The timber was heavy, and there was considerable underbrush.

To travel at anything like good speed was out of the question.

Bob was inclined to grumble.

"Say, I don't like this over much, Dick," he said, presently.

"What, Bob?"

"Oh, this work of dragging along through the timber and brush."

"Oh!"

"It's too slow, Dick."

"Too slow, eh?"

"Yes; I don't like it. I like to be out in the open, where a fellow can move fast enough to set his blood to leaping. This kind of work puts me to sleep."

"Well, we'll have to stay pretty wide awake, if we find the Swamp Fox."

"That's just it, Dick; I don't believe we'll find him."

"You don't?"

"No."

"Why not?"



"Why not?"

"Yes."

"It's simple enough. Just think for a moment: General Washington said Marion might be in Virginia, or he might be in North Carolina, or South Carolina."

"So he did."

"And he said that we would have to look for Marion in the wilderness—in the swamps."

"Yes."

"Well, just think of the wildernesses and swamps there are in Virginia alone, to say nothing of North and South Carolina."

"I know, Bob. There are a good many, that's a fact."

"I should say so, and I don't see how we are to find Marion."

"We'll have to just keep looking, old man."

"And I'm afraid that's all we will be able to do, Dick—just look."

"Oh, I think we shall be able to find the Swamp Fox, sooner or later."

"You always were a sanguine chap, Dick."

"It is just as well to be."

"But it won't find Marion."

Dick laughed.

"You always were inclined to look on the blue side of things, Bob."

Bob colored.

"Oh, I don't know. It is enough to make a fellow look blue, to think of having to search the swamps and wildernesses of three States in order to find a man."

"I don't think we will have to do that."

"You don't?"

"No."

"How will we help ourselves?"

"Oh, I think we will be able to get some tidings regarding the whereabouts of Marion before very long, and then we will be able to find him without much difficulty."

"Humph!"

It was evident that Bob doubted this, somewhat.

Dick smiled.

He understood his friend, thoroughly.

Bob was always eager to be up and doing.

He was never satisfied to simply drift along.

He wished to see results.

The youths rode onward, slowly.

The country was rough and broken, as well as heavily wooded.

Presently the youths rounded a hill and emerged into an open space about two acres in extent.

A little mountain stream ran through the glade.

On the bank of the stream, and in the centre of the glade a party of men were encamped.

The youths were taken by surprise.

They had not been looking for this.

They saw the men, and would have retreated had it not been that they realized that they had been seen.

It was too late.

The men could easily overtake them if they attempted to retreat.

No, the best plan now would be to ride boldly forward.

"Come on, Bob," said Dick, in a low voice, "we will have to brave it out."

"All right; but they're a tough-looking lot, aren't they?"

"They are, for a fact."

Several of the men who had been seated near a camp-fire leaped to their feet as the youths rode up.

All the men, of whom there were at least a score, stared at the youths curiously.

Dick, who was a good judge of men, eyed the strangers closely as he and Bob drew near.

He ran his eyes over the men, eagerly.

He thought it possible that they were members of the "Swamp Fox's" band.

Dick even hoped that he might see the face of the Swamp Fox among those of the men present.

He was disappointed, however.

He had Marion's description, and the Swamp Fox was not there.

Dick was not favorably impressed by the looks of the strangers.

They looked like reckless characters, and, indeed, to Dick's mind, many of them had a hang-dog cast of countenance.

Dick thought that they looked more like desperadoes than like honest men.

Still he would not judge them hastily.

When within a few feet of the men, Dick and Bob reined up their horses, bringing them to a stop.

Dick nodded in a friendly manner.

"Good afternoon," he said.

"Howdy!" growled the one who seemed to be the leader of the gang.

Dick was not particularly well pleased with their greeting.

He was letting nothing escape him, and he noted that a number of the men had risen and were, with seeming carelessness, moving around so as to encompass Bob and himself.

This looked threatening.

Bob noted it, too, and gave Dick a warning look.



The man who had spoken waited a few moments, and then said:

"Who air you uns?"

"We're a couple of young fellows out on a sort of vacation trip."

"Frum the No'th, hain't yo'?"

"Yes; from New York."

"Humph! Whut air yo' doin' erway down hyar?"

"Looking at the country."

"Humph!"

It was evident that the man doubted this.

He eyed the youths suspiciously.

"I b'leeve you uns air spies!" he said, in a threatening tone of voice.

"Spies?"

"Yas."

Dick pretended to be puzzled, although he felt that he and his comrade were getting into a dangerous snare.

"Spies, for what?" he asked. "I don't know what you mean."

"Yo' knows whut I meen, all right; you uns air spies fur ther rebels, now, hain't yo'?"

Dick shook his head.

"We are not spies for the rebels, or for any one else," he said, calmly.

One of the other men spoke up.

"They's spies, all right, cap'n!" he growled. "Yo' kin bet on et!"

This man was a large, black-browed, much-bewhiskered ruffianly looking fellow, and the tone of his voice made Dick angry.

When the man spoke, Dick had noted that a frown appeared on the face of the man addressed as "Cap'n," and this gave the shrewd youth an idea.

He jumped to the conclusion that this black-browed ruffian was jealous of the "Cap'n," and that the latter did not like the way the man took it upon himself to "put in."

Dick noted that the men had practically surrounded Bob and himself, and realizing that it would do no good to try to escape at present, he decided to create a diversion.

It might result favorably for himself and companion, he thought.

So he turned his eyes on the last speaker, and said:

"What do you know about it?"

The man grew red with anger.

Evidently he was a bully, and not used to being talked to in a saucy manner.

"Whut do I know erbout et?" he growled.

"Yes; what do you know about it? How happens it you are so smart?"

There was scorn in Dick's tone.

There was contempt, also.

Thick as the fellow's hide was, he felt it.

"See hyar, young feller," he growled, hoarsely, "yo' air a-gittin' a-mos' too sassy, yo' air!"

"Oh, do you think so?"

Dick's voice was cool and cutting.

The tone was so filled with scorn and contempt that it cut the fellow like the lash of a whip.

"I not on'y think so, but I knows so!"

"Oh, you do?"

The man addressed as "Cap'n," stood silently by.

It really seemed as if he was glad to have Dick and the man get into a difficulty.

Perhaps he hoped that the cool youngster might prove to be more than a match for the big, blustering ruffian.

"Yas, I do!" the man said, his voice swelling, angrily.

"An' ef yo'll git down off'n yer hoss, I'll give yo' a lesson in manners, thet's whut I'll do!"

Instantly Dick leaped to the ground.

He handed the bridle rein to Bob.

"Hold it, Bob!" he said. "I'll give this fellow a chance to give me a lesson in manners, since he wishes it!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WONDERFUL FEAT.

Dick's voice was cool and calm.

His face was serene and unruffled.

He advanced and faced the ruffian.

"Now," he said, quietly, "proceed with the lesson!"

A murmur went up from the other men.

It was a murmur of approval and admiration.

Somehow they were favorably impressed by the handsome face and manly appearance of the youth.

The ruffian growled like a dog with a bone, when another dog comes around.

"I'll knock th' head off'n yo'!" he snarled.

"In your mind!" remarked Dick, placidly.

"I'll show yo'!"

With the words, the ruffian stepped forward and began striking at Dick.

Doubtless he thought he would be able to make short work of the youth.

Dick was not nearly so large or heavy as his opponent.



Doubtless not one, with the exception of Bob, had any idea that Dick would be a match for his opponent.

Bob was not worried.

He had seen Dick in too many encounters to be afraid on his account now.

He knew his friend was amply able to take care of himself.

Dick was phenomenally strong.

In addition, he was lithe, active and as quick in his actions as a flash of lightning.

The result was that when the big ruffian struck out at Dick, his blows did not reach their destination, but were wasted upon the atmosphere.

At first Dick remained on the defensive.

He did not attempt to strike the man.

He contented himself with simply avoiding the blows aimed at him.

He ducked, dodged and parried the blows, and although some came dangerously near, none landed.

The man was evidently unaccustomed to such exertions.

Flailing the atmosphere is more tiring than striking and landing upon something.

The ruffian soon became tired.

His blows became fewer and weaker.

Dick saw this.

A quiet smile appeared upon his face.

He knew that the man was about exhausted.

The man's companions had watched affairs with surprise.

The man was, indeed, a bully.

He had beaten one or two of their number almost into insensibility when he first became a member of the band, and they had a wholesome fear of him.

They thought he would soon beat the daring youth to a jelly.

The fact that he had been unable to do so was sufficient to cause them amazement.

They saw that the wonderful agility and quickness of the youth was what had been the undoing of their comrade.

They thought that if he could once get hold of the youth, it would soon all be over.

But getting hold of him was the question.

The youth was as nimble as a flea.

The ruffian tried to grasp him, two or three times, but failed each time.

Dick was too quick for him.

The youth laughed in a tantalizing manner.

"Why don't you give me that lesson you were talking about?" he queried. "I am waiting."

"Yo' stan' still, an' I'll give et to yo', yo' cussed jumpin'-jack!" the ruffian growled.

He was panting.

Dick sized him up as being almost tired out.

The youth was confident that the man was now so weak that he could handle him easily.

He was desirous of making an impression on the fellow's companions, so he said, quietly:

"So you want me to stand still, do you?"

"Yas, yo' jes' stan' still, an' see whut I'll do to yo'!"

"You have aroused my curiosity," laughed the youth, whose dare-devil spirit had been aroused; "I really think I shall have to accommodate you!"

An eager light of delight, evidently, flashed into the red eyes of the ruffian.

He thought he saw a chance to regain the standing he had already lost through his inability to injure the youth.

"Jes' yo' stan' still, ef yo' dare!" he grated.

Dick suddenly paused.

He stood still and faced the ruffian.

"I am standing still," he remarked, calmly; "now give the lesson."

With a hoarse growl of delight the man leaped forward and tried to catch hold of the youth.

He was greeted by a surprise.

Dick was on the watch, and as the other reached out to seize him, the youth seized him by the wrists.

Exerting his wonderful strength, Dick hurled the other from him.

The youth had not seemed to exert himself greatly.

Yet, to the surprise of the spectators—with the exception of Bob—the man was hurled backward with great force and he went whirling around and around, and finally fell upon his face on the ground, a dozen feet distant.

Wondering cries of amazement escaped the lips of the men.

They knew the weight and strength of the fallen man.

They had a good idea of the strength of arm necessary to hurl the man such a distance, and they could not help feeling of wondering amazement.

"Thet beats ennything I ever seen!"

"Did yo' ever see th' likes uv thet?"

"I never did!"

"I wouldn't hev b'leaved et posserble!"

"Nur me, ef I hedn't seen et!"

"I'd never thort thet young feller c'u'd be so stout!"

Such were a few of the exclamations.

As for the ruffian, he lay where he had fallen, seemingly so dazed by the rapid whirling and the shock of the fall as to be incapable of making a movement.



Only for a few moments, however.

Then he slowly struggled to his feet.

Dick stood erect, and manly looking, his arms folded, a quiet smile on his face.

As the ruffian faced around, the youth said, banteringly:

"Come on; I am anxious to receive that lesson in manners!"

The look on the ruffian's face was comical to see.

Surprise, wonder, anger, fear were there.

It was evident that he hardly knew what to think.

He still thought himself able to handle the youth, however, if he once succeeded in getting his hands on him, and he again advanced to the attack.

He was more careful this time.

He had learned something.

He had discovered that the youth was as strong as himself, almost, if not quite.

"Go in and give him a good thrashing, Dick," said Bob. "You can give him a lesson, if you want to, instead of him giving you one."

Dick smiled, and made a gesture.

"All right, Bob," he said; "I'll surprise him a bit, this time, just for fun."

A few minutes before, such a remark would have been hailed as the bravado of a foolish youth, who was overconfident, but now the statement evoked no derisive remarks or laughter.

The spectators more than half believed the youth could do as he said.

The ruffian who had attacked Dick seemed to fear that this might be the case, for he advanced very cautiously.

"Ef I git my han's onter yo', onct!" he growled.

"You'll wish you hadn't!" chipped in Bob.

An angry growl was all the reply from the man.

He suddenly leaped forward and attempted to seize hold of Dick.

The youth was on the watch.

He was not to be taken by surprise by such an awkward ruffian as this one.

Dick was willing to test strength with the fellow, however.

He let the man get hold of him.

He was simply careful not to let him get a hold that would be dangerous.

Dick, by dexterous work, succeeded in getting a favorite hold on the man.

He had made up his mind to secure it, if possible.

Then he would be able to treat the fellow's comrades to an exhibition which would be spectacular, to say the least.

The instant he found he had the hold, and had foiled

his opponent's attempt to secure a dangerous hold, Dick began manœuvring for the thing he had in mind.

He held the man helpless, and slowly but surely worked him around till he got him just right, and then of a sudden, Dick exerted all his wonderful strength.

The big ruffian was lifted off the ground quick as a flash.

Up went his heels, high in the air.

For an instant the body of the big ruffian came to a rest on the right shoulder of the youth—only for an instant, however.

The next moment on up into the air went the body, and then, in a twinkling, the ruffian was held high in the air, at the full length of Dick's arms, above his head.

The youth stood there, steady as a rock.

Not a muscle quivered.

He held the man, seemingly, as easily as though he had been made of straw.

The wonderful feat made the spectators gasp.

Exclamations of wonder and amazement escaped them.

"Did yo' ever!"

"Jes' look at thet!"

"Et beats ennything I ever saw!"

"I wouldn't a-b'leaved et!"

It was indeed a wonderful feat.

It was a feat that, as the spectators were well aware, required the exercise of wonderful strength.

No one who saw him would have suspected that Dick was so strong.

But they had the proof before them.

The men supposed that Dick would throw his opponent to the ground, and perhaps break his neck.

They felt that he had a right to do so.

They knew that had the affair been reversed, and Dick been in their comrade's hands, he would not have been spared.

And they did not expect that the youth would spare his victim.

But Dick did not have any desire to cripple the man.

"Now, my friend," he said, in an even, quiet tone, "you yourself have been given a lesson, and if you are willing to acknowledge yourself beaten, I will let you down."

A hoarse growl was the reply.

The man accompanied the growl with some vigorous kicks.

"Oh, that's the way you feel about it, eh?" remarked Dick. "You had better acknowledge yourself whipped, and let me let you off easy. I have no desire to hurt you."

"I'll kill yo'!" howled the man. "I'll have yo' heart's blood fur this!"

"Acknowledge yourself beaten, and I will let you down."



"No, I won't do et. I'll kil yo', thet's whut I'll do; I'll break yo' neck for yo', thet's whut I'll do!"

"You had better be sensible!" warned Dick.

The man's answer was to struggle vigorously and kick with all his might.

He did not seem to have any intention of being sensible.

"Let me down, I tell yo'!" he howled. "Let me down, or it'll be the worse for yo'!"

But Dick did not let him down.

He knew that it would not do to do so.

The man was now as mad as a man could be, and would certainly try to do his conqueror injury.

Dick did not feel like taking any chances.

He was not going to let himself be killed or badly injured by this rascal, if he could help himself, and he felt that he could.

At present he held the whiphand and he felt that it would be very foolish of him not to use it.

Still he did not wish to cripple the man seriously, and realizing that to throw the fellow on the hard ground might do this, Dick looked around in search of something else that he might do.

He took note of the fact that he was standing only a few yards distant from the bank of the stream which flowed through the little glade.

An idea struck Dick.

"The very thing!" he said to himself.

Dick's idea was to toss the obstreperous ruffian into the waters of the stream.

"It will cool him off," he said to himself, "and will not injure him seriously, either."

With Dick, to decide was to act.

He lost no time.

Holding the ruffian extended above his head, Dick took two or three steps forward.

He measured the distance with his eyes.

Pausing, he braced himself for the effort.

The spectators watched Dick in spellbound silence.

They saw what he was going to do.

Not a person made a movement to prevent the youth from putting his purpose into execution.

Suddenly Dick gave the ruffian a strong toss forward and outward.

The man shot over the bank of the stream and down toward the water like a shot.

Splash!

The ruffian struck the water, and, with a gurgling cry of terror, disappeared beneath the surface.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE DUEL.

Cries of amazement escaped the lips of the man's comrades.

"Did yo' ever!"

"Thet beats ennythin' I ever seen!"

"Who'd a thort et!"

"Ther youngster's ther bes' man I ever seen!"

"He sart'inly is!"

Indeed, the feat Dick had performed was a wonderful one.

Few men could have performed it.

Bob was delighted.

He uttered an involuntary shout of delight.

"Hurrah, Dick, old man!" he cried. "I'll wager that is the first bath that fellow has taken in a year!"

Dick smiled.

He stepped to the bank of the stream and looked down.

As he did so the ruffian came to the surface.

He kicked and floundered about at a great rate.

There was no danger that he would drown.

It was a mountain stream, and was swift-flowing, but shallow.

It was hard work for the fellow to retain a foothold, the water rushed against his legs with such force.

He managed to do so, however, and gradually worked his way toward the shore.

"Yo' wants to look out for him, young feller," said one of the men, warningly; "he'll be pizen mad, now, an'll try ter shoot yo', er carve yo' up with his knife."

"He won't be able to shoot," replied Dick; "the water will have rendered his pistols useless, temporarily."

"Thet's so; but he'll knife yo'."

"Don't let him get within reach of you, Dick!" warned Bob, anxiously. "Shoot the scoundrel if he tries anything like that!"

"I'll look out for him, Bob."

The ruffian got out on the bank, presently.

He was a sorry-looking object.

He was soaking wet, and his hair was stringing down in his face and eyes.

He brushed the hair back and glared around him.

His eyes fell on Dick.

A hoarse growl escaped him.

He drew a pistol, leveled it and pulled the trigger.

The hammer went down with a dull thud, but the spark from the flint failed to set off the powder.



It had been made damp by the immersion in the water, and would not ignite.

A curse escaped the ruffian.

He threw the pistol down and drew a long-bladed, ugly-looking knife.

"I'll fix yo' with this!" he grated. "It won't miss fiah!"

"Look out for him, Dick!"

This from Bob.

Dick realized now that he would have to use severe measures with this ruffian.

He would have to hurt the fellow before he would be content to let him alone.

Dick stood perfectly still, however, until the man was almost within striking distance.

Indeed, the ruffian drew back his arm to strike with the knife, before the youth made a movement.

Then he suddenly leaped to one side.

The ruffian struck at him with the knife.

Dick easily dodged the stroke.

Then the youth's arm shot out.

His fist took the man fair on the jaw.

It was a terrible blow.

Dick had put all his strength into it.

Down went the ruffian, as if stricken by a sledgehammer.

A long-drawn-out "Ah-h-h-h-h!" escaped the lips of the spectators.

It was the most wonderful stroke they had ever seen delivered.

The result of the stroke surprised them, too.

The ruffian did not, as they expected, scramble to his feet and renew the attack.

Instead, he lay still.

He had been knocked senseless by the blow.

This was something new to the rough mountaineers.

They had never seen a man knocked senseless by a blow from a man's fist.

They would not have believed it possible that such a thing could be done.

But now they had optical proof that such a thing was possible.

"Good!" cried Bob, in delight. "That was a sockdollar, old man!"

Dick stooped down, and taking the knife out of the man's hand, tossed it to one of his comrades.

"He might wish to try to use it when he comes to," he remarked, quietly, "and it will be better for him if he has no weapons, for I may hurt him badly if he persists in his course."

"An' serve 'im right, too!" said one of the men.

This remark proved to the youths that the insensible man was not well-liked by his companions.

Perhaps a half minute passed.

Then the fallen man began stirring.

A few moments later he sat up.

He rubbed his eyes, and then felt, gingerly, of his jaw.

Evidently he felt some pain at that point.

He looked around at his comrades, and then his eyes fell upon Dick.

The remembrance of it all came back to him at once.

A dark frown crossed his face.

A fierce look appeared in his eyes.

"I remember, now!" he growled. "You did this, yo' cussed young whelp! Yo' knocked me down, but I'll hev yo' life for et! Yo' hev gotter fight me, man ter man, with pistils, an' I'll kil yo', thet's whut I'll do!"

The men looked at Dick, quickly.

They wished to see how the proposition would strike the handsome youth.

Dick was calm and unruffled.

"Do you mean that for a challenge?" he asked.

"Yes, I means thet fur er challenge, an' ef yo' hain't er coward, yo'll accept et."

Dick smiled, and a look of contempt appeared on his lips.

"I am not a coward," he said, quietly.

"Then prove et by sayin' yo'll meet me."

Dick hesitated.

He looked the man straight in the eyes.

"See here," he said; "I can't say I like you, but at the same time I don't feel hard enough against you to wish to kill you. Why not call it even as it is, and let the matter rest?"

"Arter yo' pitched me inter ther crick, like I wuz er blamed no'count bundle uv pertaters, an' then a'mos' broke my jaw with a lick frum thet thar iron fist uv yo'n? I guess not! Yo've hed yo' fun, an' now I'm ergoin' ter hev mine!"

Dick looked around at the man's companions, as if to ask their opinion.

"I think yo' orter meet 'im," the one who had been addressed as "Cap'n" said. "Yo' hev kinder han'led 'im rough-like, an' natcherly he feels as ef he'd like ter git squar' with yo'. Yo' hed better meet 'im."

This decided the youth.

"All right," he said, quietly; "if he will have it, I am agreeable. I have no wish to take his life, but I shall have to shoot him, I suppose, before he will be satisfied."

"Don't yo' feel so shore erbout thet," the man said; "I am ther champeen shot uv these hyar parts, an' I don't



'low thet no No'thern cuss kin come down hyar an' beat me with er pistil, nohow yo' kin fix et!"

Dick smiled.

"You will soon see," he said.

Then he turned to his comrade.

"I guess you will have to act for me, Bob," he said; "just jump down off your horse and come along."

Bob leaped to the ground with alacrity.

His face was quite grave.

"Say, this is tough, Dick," he said; "the idea of you being forced into a duel with that ruffian! It is an outrage!"

"It doesn't matter, Bob. I am a dead shot, as you know, and will be able to get the better of him."

"Yes, but he may accidentally hit you."

"I don't think there is much danger. If he doesn't hit me at the first fire he won't be able to do so at all, as I shall be careful not to let him have a second chance at me."

One of the men had volunteered to act as the second for the man, and he and Bob got together.

It was decided, after some discussion that the two should stand twenty paces apart and at the word should advance, and fire at will, each to have two pistols.

This was quite satisfactory to Dick.

He could easily bring a man down at twenty paces with his pistols, and he did not believe that his opponent could do so.

Each man was allowed the privilege of using his own weapons.

The man drew the wet charges out of his pistols, and reloaded the weapons, Bob being present to see that he did not put in more than one ball.

At last all was ready, and the men took their places, the distance having been stepped off.

Each held a pistol in either hand.

The men who were to be spectators of the duel got off to one side where they would be out of range of the bullets.

It was an interesting scene.

The motley crowd, the picturesque surroundings, the seriousness of the affair about to take place, all conspired to make it interesting.

Bob was nervous, and was somewhat pale.

Dick, on the other hand, was cool and calm.

He did not seem to be worried at all.

He called Bob to him, however, and said:

"In case I should fall, Bob, you will tell the folks at home that my last thoughts were of them."

"I will, Dick."

Bob's voice trembled.

"Oh, say," he whispered, "let me take your place and fight this fellow, Dick! Please do!"

Dick shook his head.

"Not to be thought of, Bob. No; I will fight my own battle, and I have no fear for the result. Still, in case I should fall, tell Alice not to grieve for me."

"I'll tell her, Dick."

"Are yo' ready?" came in the voice of the man who had been chosen to give the word.

"Yes, we are ready," replied Bob.

He grasped Dick's hand and wrung it.

"Be careful, Dick!" he said, in a low, tense tone. "Shoot the fellow as quickly as possible, and thus put a stop to his chances for shooting you. You are quick on the aim."

"Don't fear for me, Bob."

"Ready!" called out the master of ceremonies.

Dick and his opponent leveled the pistols held in their right hands.

"Take aim!"

Loud and clear rang out the words.

Bob held his breath and watched Dick, eagerly, anxiously.

Dick, on his part, took careful aim.

His hand was firm.

His nerves were perfectly steady.

"Fire!"

Crack!—crack!

Two reports rang out.

It was barely possible to distinguish that there were two.

It sounded almost like one report, slightly elongated.

Both had fired at almost the same instant.

Dick had been a trifle quicker than his opponent.

The result was that the bullet from his pistol struck his opponent in the shoulder, and this had the effect of causing the fellow's pistol to jerk upward.

The bullet was deflected from a straight line toward Dick, going slantingly upward, and it whistled above the youth's head a foot at least.

A cry of pain and anger escaped Dick's opponent.

His pistol dropped from his hand.

He fell forward upon the ground, and rolled about in seeming great agony.

"Oh, I'm er dead man!" he howled. "Ther cuss hez killed me, an' no mistake! Oh, oh-h-h-h-h-h!"

Several of the men ran to where their comrade lay.

"I hope he hez got er wound whut'll finish 'im!" said one of the men in an undertone, but which was overheard by Bob.

Bob rushed to his comrade.

"Are you wounded, Dick?" he cried, eagerly.



Dick shook his head.

"No, I'm not hurt, Bob," he replied; "the bullet went above my head, thanks to the fact that I was a little too quick for him, and put a bullet in his shoulder just as he was pulling the trigger."

"Good! Jove, I was afraid he might accidentally finish you, old man!"

"I hope I haven't mortally wounded the fellow, Bob; would you mind going and seeing how bad a wound he has received?"

"No; I'll go at once."

Bob hastened away.

He returned in a few minutes.

"He has a bad wound in the shoulder, but it is not necessarily fatal," was the report he brought.

"I'm glad of that," said Dick.

Then he looked around him, with an anxious expression on his face.

"I wish we were away from here, Bob," he said, in a low tone; "I don't like the looks of these fellows."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### PRISONERS.

"It does look as if we are in a snare, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, you are right."

"Can't we cut and run for it?"

"And leave our horses?"

"Yes."

"That would not do at all. We would be helpless without our horses."

"That's so; we couldn't get anywhere."

"No; we must wait till we can get away on horseback."

Several of the men had taken care to keep between the youths and their horses.

They had done it in an apparently careless manner, but Dick was sure it was done purposely, just the same.

Still he thought it possible that the men might not try to prevent himself and Bob from going, and he was determined to make the attempt to start.

He told Bob this, in a low, cautious tone of voice.

"We'll tell them good-by in a matter-of-fact way, and start to mount our horses, Bob," he said; "perhaps they won't try to prevent us from going."

"We can try it," agreed Bob; "but I'll wager that they won't let us go."

Dick feared so, himself.

He was determined to make the attempt, however.

He led the way, and they walked toward where their horses stood.

Before they could reach the animals, however, the leader of the band placed himself in their path.

He held up his hand to warn them back.

"Hol' on; whar yo' goin'?" he asked.

"We thought that we would continue on our journey," said Dick, quietly.

"Continny on yo' journey, hey?"

"Yes."

"Whar wuz yo' headed foh, young feller?"

"Oh, we are not going anywhere in particular."

"Nowhar in 'tickler, hey?"

"No."

"Humph! Then yo' mought ez well stay hyar with us foh er leetle while, don't yo' think?"

But this would not suit Dick at all.

He wished to keep moving.

If he and his comrade stopped here, they would not stand much chance of running across Marion and his band.

They must not stop and remain in one place.

So Dick shook his head.

"No," he said, "myself and friend here are out for pleasure and recreation, and we don't wish to sit down and keep still. We wish to keep moving. I guess we will ride on."

The man shook his head in his turn.

"I don't think yo' will do thet."

Dick had expected nothing else than that the fellow would object, but he pretended to be surprised.

He elevated his eyebrows and looked at the man interrogatively.

"Why not?" Dick asked.

"Oh, becos."

"That's no reason."

"Waal, yo' see, et's this way: We don' know who yo' air, nur whar yo' air goin', nur whut yo' air doin' down hyar in this part uv ther kentry, an' we have made up our min's thet et will be ther bes' fur all uv us ter hev yo' stay hyar with us fur erwhile."

Dick frowned.

"To stay here with you for a few days!" he exclaimed.

"Yas."

"But there is no need of that."

"Yo' think not?"

"No."

"Waal, I think diff runt."

"You have no right to keep us here," said Dick.

The man grinned.



"Mebby we hev'n't ther right," he said, "but we hev ther might."

And he indicated the men, with a sweep of the hand.

"Oh, I know you have the power to keep us," agreed Dick, "but there is no reason why you should do so. You will gain nothing by it."

"Mebby not."

"Of course not."

"Waal, we won't lose nothin', neether."

Dick compressed his lips.

A dangerous look appeared in his eyes.

"Don't be too sure of that!" he said.

The man started and looked at Dick, searchingly.

"Whut do yo' mean?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!"

The fellow shook his head.

"Yo' mean somethin'," he declared, "an' et on'y makes me ther more detarmined ter keep yo' hyar fur erwhile!"

"I give you fair warning that you won't gain anything by it," said Dick.

"Thet's all right; yo' kaint scare me!"

"I'm not trying to scare you. I'm simply telling you the truth."

The man nodded.

"Thet's all right; we'll resk yo' doin' us enny dam-midge."

Dick glanced around.

He saw that he and Bob were practically surrounded.

It would be dangerous to attempt to break through the cordon of men and escape.

He decided that it would be wiser to wait for a more opportune time—for a better opportunity.

"Are we to consider ourselves prisoners?" he asked.

The man nodded.

"Yas, yo' air pris'ners. Yo' mought ez well shuck yo' weepins at onet, an' be done with et."

The youths hated to allow themselves to be disarmed, but they saw no way out of it, and removed their pistols and handed them over to the man.

He then ordered that the youths' hands be tied together behind their backs, and this was done.

Then the youths were placed on the backs of their horses and the entire party set out through the timber.

Four men, carrying the fellow Dick had wounded in the duel had already gone on ahead.

The party moved through the timber for more than an hour.

A tolerably well-defined trail was followed.

Presently the party emerged into a little valley.

There was perhaps forty acres of land in the valley.

Mountains were on three sides, the general shape being that of a giant horseshoe.

At about the centre of the open side a good-sized stream flowed.

Back at the farther end of the valley were three good-sized log houses.

The party advanced to the cabins.

The youths were taken off the backs of the horses and conducted into one of the cabins.

There was a partition dividing the interior into two rooms, and the youths were ushered into what was in reality the back room, and the door was closed upon them, and a heavy bar was placed across it.

The youths sat down and looked at each other.

There was such a comical look of disgust on Bob's face that Dick could not help smiling.

"What is the matter, Bob?" he asked. "You look disgusted."

"I am disgusted, too, Dick."

The smile left Dick's face.

"I must say that I, too, am disgusted, Bob," he said, soberly.

"We are in a snare, Dick."

"It looks like it, Bob."

"We have been trapped, nicely."

"Well, as to that, they haven't got us hard and fast yet."

Bob's face brightened.

"You think we can escape?" he asked, in a low, eager tone.

Dick nodded.

"I think so, Bob. We have been in worse places than this and escaped."

"Well, so we have."

"We could have escaped, back yonder, where they first encountered us, but we would have had to leave our horses. I thought it better to wait till to-night, and then try to secure our horses and get away in good shape."

"That will be best, of course."

There was the sound of the bar being removed from across the door, and the youths became silent.

A moment later the door opened.

The leader of the band and one of his men entered.

"Waal, how air yo' gittin' erlong?" the man greeted.

"Very well, thank you," replied Dick, quietly.

"Thet's good. We hain't ergoin' ter hurt you uns, ef yo' turns out ter be all right."

"Glad to hear that."

"We furgot one thing, back yonder, when we made yo' giv' up yo' weepins."

"What was that?"



"We furgot ter s'arch yo'."

Dick started.

"Oh," he said, "that's it?"

"Yas."

The two men proceeded to search the pockets of the youths' clothing.

They found a little gold and silver, a few odds and ends such as might be looked for, but they did not find the message which Dick was a bearer of from General Washington to Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox.

The message had been written on soft, flexible paper, and was sewed in the lining of Dick's coat.

When the search was ended the two men withdrew, closing and barring the door.

"Well, Dick, they didn't find the message," whispered Bob.

"No; I didn't think they would."

"They got our money, though."

"True; well, we can get along without that."

"Yes, if we have to. I would rather have a little gold and silver, however."

"So would I, but I'll be satisfied to secure our weapons and horses."

"Yes, that will be better than going away and leaving the horses."

The youths remained undisturbed till evening, and then one of the men brought them their supper.

It consisted of cornbread and sweet potatoes.

It was not much for variety, but there was plenty of it, and the youths ate heartily.

They tried to get the man to talk.

"How long do you think we will be kept here?" asked Dick.

The fellow shook his head.

"I dunno," he replied, stolidly.

"Well, how long do you think?"

"Yo'll hev ter ax ther boss."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas."

Clearly nothing was to be learned from this fellow.

Dick did not ask any more questions.

When they had finished the meal the fellow withdrew.

"I feel better," said Bob, with a yawn.

"So do I, Bob."

"A good lot of food when a fellow is hungry will put new life and strength into him, eh, Dick?"

"Yes, indeed."

"I feel that we will be able to get out of here, all right, to-night."

"We'll make a strong effort, anyway, Bob."

Slowly but steadily it grew darker in the room.

Finally it was all the youths could do to see each other.

Later on they could not make out each other at all.

Then the sounds of revelry were heard coming from the other room.

There was loud talk and laughter, and singing in voices which were more strenuous than musical.

"The scoundrels are having a jolly time, eh, Dick?" remarked Bob.

"It sounds that way, Bob."

"I suppose they are having a drinking bout."

"Quite likely."

"It won't do for us to try to make our escape while they are so wide awake, will it?"

"No; it would not be safe. Some of them might take it into their heads to come in and see what we were doing at any moment."

The youths waited with all the patience they could command.

At last the sounds of revelry began to die down.

They grew less and less in volume, and finally nothing at all was heard.

"They have drunk themselves into a stupor, Bob," said Dick; "now is the time for us to get to work."

"All right, Dick."

The youths began working to loosen their bonds.

This was slow work, but they persevered, and presently had the satisfaction of knowing that they were succeeding.

The bonds were becoming loosened.

Then came a shock.

Just as they were on the point of getting their arms free, there came the sound of some one at the door.

The youths heard the rattle of the bar which held the door shut.

"Some one is coming!" exclaimed Bob, in a thrilling whisper.

## CHAPTER V.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

The youths were startled and disconcerted.

They were vexed as well.

Was their attempt to escape to be a failure, after all?"

Was it to be their fate to have to remain in this place until the men were ready to let them go?

"Quick, Bob!" whispered Dick. "Get your hands free if possible, and we will throttle this fellow, whoever he is!"



"All right, Dick!"

Both worked with feverish haste.

They had almost succeeded in freeing their hands when the door swung open.

As the person who had opened the door stepped into the room, a simultaneous cry of amazement escaped the lips of the youths.

Good reason for the exclamations of amazement.

The person who entered was a girl of not more than eighteen years of age.

She carried a candle in her hand, and as her eyes fell on the youths, she exclaimed:

"Ah, you are awake!"

The youths were staring in open-mouthed amazement.

"Yes, we are awake," was Dick's reply, in a mechanical tone of voice.

He hardly knew he spoke at all.

Who could this girl be?

The youths were filled with wonder.

That a beautiful girl—for she was an astonishingly beautiful maiden—should be in such a place was very surprising.

"Who are you?" asked Bob, bluntly.

The girl flushed, slightly.

"My name is Mary Draper," she replied, "and I am the daughter of—of—the leader of these men."

She nodded toward the outer room as she spoke.

"And to what do we owe the honor of this visit from you, miss?" asked Dick.

"I have come to set you free!"

The girl spoke quietly, but her words made the youths' hearts leap with joy.

Instead of arousing the men and giving the alarm, she was going to help them to escape.

"To set us free!" exclaimed the youths in unison.

The girl nodded.

"Yes."

Dick and Bob were greatly surprised.

"Why do you wish to set us free?" asked Dick.

The girl blushed.

"I—I—was afraid that my father might agree to let you be put to death, and so decided to assist you to escape."

"Has there been any talk of putting us to death?" asked Dick.

"Yes."

"Why should they wish to do that?"

"Some of the friends of the man with whom you fought the duel demanded that you be put out of the way."

The youths understood.

"Ah, I understand," said Dick. "But aren't you running a great risk in assisting us?"

The girl shook her head.

"No; every man on the place is dead drunk, even to the sentinel."

"Ah, that is good!"

The girl stepped forward.

She held a sharp knife in her hand.

She quickly cut the youths' bonds.

She noted the fact that the youths had almost freed their hands.

"You would soon have had your hands at liberty," she remarked.

"Yes," replied Dick, "but we would have had a hard time getting out of this room, I judge."

"So you would. The building is very solid, being of large logs."

"Yes; it is better to go in this manner. Do you know where our weapons were put?"

"I have them, just outside. Come."

The girl led the way out of the room.

The youths followed.

The men were lying about on the floor of the other room, and were one and all in a drunken stupor-like sleep.

There was no need of stepping lightly.

There was not the least danger of arousing any of the sleepers.

The three passed through the outer doorway.

Just around the corner of the building the girl paused.

"There are your weapons," she said.

The pistols lay in a pile on the ground.

The youths stooped and possessed themselves of the weapons.

"Thank you, very much!" said Dick, earnestly.

"You are welcome!" was the low-spoken reply.

"Now, do you know where our horses are, miss?"

"I do; come, and I will show you."

She led the way, the youths following closely.

The girl had extinguished the light.

It was quite dark, but not so dark but that the three could see each other.

The girl led the way to a point perhaps a hundred yards from the cabins.

There was a little clump of trees at this point.

The youths' horses were tied to a couple of the trees.

"Ah, here are our horses!" said Dick, in a tone of satisfaction.

"But where are the saddles?" remarked Bob.

"They are here," said the girl; "I brought the saddle and bridles and placed them here an hour ago."



"You are a noble-hearted girl!" exclaimed Dick. "And what worries me is that I fear we shall be unable to do anything to repay you for your kindness to us."

"Don't let that bother you," said the girl; "I am glad to be of benefit to you. The knowledge that I have done what is right will be ample compensation."

Dick was interested in the girl.

He hardly knew what to think.

Mary Draper seemed to possess a very good education.

She was not at all the uncouth, illiterate maiden that one would naturally have expected to find in such a place, and amid such surroundings.

The youths sought to find out something regarding the girl, but she seemed unwilling to talk of herself.

"You had better not delay," she said, presently; "some of the men might awaken, and then, if it was discovered that you have escaped, the chase might be set up quickly enough so that you would be unable to escape."

The youths recognized the truth of this remark, and proceeded to bridle and saddle their horses.

When they had finished this task they turned to the girl.

Each youth pressed the hand of the girl, thanked her, earnestly, and bade her good-by.

At this instant all three were startled by wild yells from the cabin in which the youths had been confined.

"Quick, you must fly!" the girl cried. "They have discovered your escape!"

"But you!" said Dick. "Won't they hurt you? Won't they suspect that you set us free?"

"No, no! Don't fear for me! Fly for your lives! If they catch you, they will kill you! Don't delay a moment!"

"Well, good-by, then, and heaven bless you!" said Dick.

The youths mounted their horses and rode away.

They were soon out of the little valley.

They could not see to pick their way, so they let their horses go at their own will.

The animals had good eyes and could follow the trail no matter how dark it might be.

The youths turned their heads and listened to the sounds in the valley they had just left.

There was considerable shouting and yelling.

"It sounds as if they were coming after us, Dick," said Bob.

"You are right," was the reply.

"They'll be able to give us a good chase, too, don't you think?"

"I fear so; it is impossible for us to go fast through this thick timber, in the darkness."

"We'll have to get along as fast as possible, and then

if they catch up with us we will have to show fight, eh, Dick?"

"That is about it, Bob."

The youths kept their horses going at a rapid walk.

Behind them they could hear the sounds of pursuit.

Their situation was anything but a pleasant one.

It was dangerous, to say the least.

The youths were not dismayed, however.

They had encountered too many dangers, had been in too many tight places during the years that they had been members of the patriot army to be greatly dismayed.

They were veterans now, and philosophers.

They took matters as they came and made the best of them.

They were determined to make a fight before submitting to capture again.

The sounds of pursuit became plainer.

"They are gaining on us," said Bob.

"I believe you're right," replied Dick.

"I am sure of it; the yelling sounds closer."

"Yes, we can hear their voices plainer."

Onward rode the youths.

After them came their pursuers.

"Jove! if we could only get out of this timber and into the open country where we could get some speed out of our horses, we would be all right," said Bob.

"So we would," agreed Dick; "perhaps we may be able to succeed in doing so; those fellows don't seem to be overhauling us very fast."

"No, you're right about that."

The youths kept steadily onward and hoped for the best.

At last they reached the open space where they had encountered the band of men who had made them prisoners.

They crossed this space and entered the timber at the farther side.

As they left the open space, their pursuers entered it.

"They're close upon us, old man," said Bob.

"Yes; well, we'll have to do the best we can."

It was evident that the pursuers were tracking the youths by the noise made by the horses in moving through the timber.

Presently a loud voice called out:

"Yo' had better stop; yo' kain't git erway frum us no way yo' kin fix et. Yo' might as well stop an' give up."

The youths made no reply.

Neither did they stop.

They were determined to keep on going, come what might.



"Ef yo' don't stop, we'll fire on yo'!" came in a loud, threatening voice.

Still the youths did not stop or make reply.

They urged their horses onward.

Perhaps half a minute passed, and then came the sound of firearms.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

The youths heard the whistle of the bullets.

Some of them came uncomfortably near.

Fortunately, none took effect, however.

"That is a game that two can play at!" said Dick, grimly. "Are you ready, Bob?"

"Ready, Dick!"

"All right; give it to them!"

Crack!—crack! Crack!—crack!

The youths fired four shots.

Following close upon the heels of the reports came a couple of wild yells of pain.

"I guess we must have hit somebody, Dick," said Bob, in a tone of satisfaction.

"It would seem so."

"I hope it will have the effect of stopping the pursuit."

"I hardly think it will do that; it may put a damper on it, however."

"I hope so."

It did have the effect of slackening the pursuit.

It also had the effect of causing another volley to be fired at them.

The pursuers were not so lucky as Dick and Bob had been, however.

None of the bullets fired took effect.

The youths urged their horses onward.

They could hear the sounds of pursuit, but not so plainly as before.

This proved that the men, fearful of more shots from the youths, had fallen back.

They wished to keep out of range.

"All right," murmured Dick, grimly; "if you'll just keep that far back till we get out into the open country, I'll guarantee that you'll never overtake us."

Presently, after the lapse of an hour—so it seemed to the youths—they came out into a well-defined road.

The moon had now risen and the youths could see fairly well.

They struck into the road and urged their horses to a gallop.

"We're all right now, Dick," said Bob, jubilantly.

"Yes, I guess we will have no trouble in showing our pursuers a clean pair of heels now," said Dick.

The youths were right.

They did not see or hear their pursuers again.

They rode steadily onward till morning.

Shortly after daybreak, as they were riding along the lonely road, they were treated to an unpleasant surprise.

A party of men suddenly rode out from the edge of the timber and confronted the youths.

"Halt!" cried one of the men. "Surrender, or you are dead men!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### WITH THE "SWAMP FOX."

The youths were startled.

They were vexed as well.

Were they to be captured again, so soon after making their escape from the band of mountain outlaws?

It looked that way, as the force confronting them was far too strong for them to expect to fight against successfully.

Dick ran his eyes over the men, quickly.

Then a sudden thought came to him

Might not this be Marion's band?

Dick had not at that time ever met the Swamp Fox.

He had been given a description of the man, however, and the man who had ordered them to surrender looked like the man described.

Dick urged his horse forward until within a few feet of the man in question.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me who you are, sir?" the youth asked, respectfully.

The man looked at the youth, sharply, searchingly.

"There is no reason why I should not do so," he replied; "I am Francis Marion, better known, perhaps, as the 'Swamp Fox.'"

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "I have a message for you."

The Swamp Fox, for he, indeed, it was, looked surprised.

"A message for me?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"The commander-in-chief."

"Of what?"

"The patriot army."

"Ah! And who are you?"

"My name is Dick Slater, and my comrade here is Bob Estabrook."

Marion started.



A pleased look appeared on his face.

He extended his hand, which Dick grasped.

"I have heard of you," he said; "you are the captain of a band of youths known as 'The Liberty Boys of '76'—are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad to meet you!"

"I can more than return the compliment!" said Dick, earnestly. "I have heard a great deal about you, and I can say that it makes me happy to grasp the hand of a man such as you have proven yourself to be."

Marion smiled, and then spurred his horse forward and shook hands with Bob.

"It is all right, men!" he called out. "These youths are friends."

Then he said:

"Our camp is a short distance from here. We will go there and have breakfast, and you can deliver the message to me there."

Then he gave the order, and all rode into the timber, Dick and Bob keeping alongside the Swamp Fox.

They soon came to an opening in the forest.

Some men were lounging on the ground, and there was a tent at one side.

This tent was the quarters occupied by the Swamp Fox.

His men had nothing to cover them save the sky.

All dismounted, and then Marion turned to the youths.

"Come to my tent," he said; "you will breakfast with me."

"Thank you," said Dick.

They accompanied the Swamp Fox to his tent, and into it.

Marion indicated a couple of camp-stools, and said:

"Be seated."

The youths sat down.

Marion took a seat on another stool.

"Breakfast is ready, I think," he said; "we were just about to eat when one of my lookouts reported that a couple of horsemen were approaching from the northward, and we mounted in hot haste and rode out and intercepted you."

"I'm glad your lookout saw us," said Dick, "for we were searching for you and were afraid we were going to have a hard time finding you."

"Now for the message," said Marion.

Dick rose, took off his coat, and taking a penknife from his pocket, ripped a seam of the lining.

Reaching in through the opening he drew forth a slip of paper.

He handed it to the Swamp Fox.

"There is the message," he said.

Marion took the message, opened it and read it.

"Very good," he murmured; "very good, indeed. I will do my best to do as the commander-in-chief wishes."

Then he turned to the youths.

"General Washington wishes me to begin a campaign in the vicinity of Richmond," he said. "He wishes me to worry the redcoats all I possibly can, and he says that if I wish any spy work done, that I may retain you two youths a while, and make use of you."

Dick's eyes brightened.

Bob looked pleased, also.

"That would suit us, wouldn't it Bob?" Dick asked.

"Yes, Dick. I rather like the looks of this country, and would enjoy spending a few weeks here."

"Very good!" said the Swamp Fox. "If you are willing to put up with much risk and poor fare, I shall be glad to attach you to my command for a while."

"We have not been used to luxuries," smiled Dick.

"We are pretty well seasoned," said Bob; "we can stand the risk and the poor fare."

"It is settled, then. You will remain with me for a while."

Breakfast was brought at this juncture, a fat negro being the one who brought it.

"What have you to eat, this morning, Sam?" asked Marion.

"Sweet p'taties, sah; dat's all whut we has, sah," was the reply.

"Sweet potatoes, eh?"

"Yes, sah."

"Have you plenty of those, Sam?"

"Yes, sah; we has plenty, sah."

"It is all right, then; I do not object to the variety being limited, so long as the quantity is not. Sweet potatoes will fill one up, if you have enough of them."

"Yah, yah! Dat's right, sah! Sweet p'taties is mighty good eatin', dough uv yo' has some 'possum ter go wid um, hit makes hit bettah."

"True, but we have no 'possum, so will make the best of it with the potatoes alone."

Then Marion turned to the youths.

"I am sorry that I have nothing better to offer you," he said, "but, as I told you, if you remain with me, you will have to take many risks and put up with poor fare."

"We've got along on worse fare than this, eh, Dick?" grinned Bob.

"Many a time," nodded Dick. "We will get along on the fare, sir."

All three ate heartily.



Soon after the meal was ended, Marion gave the order to saddle and bridle and mount.

Fifteen minutes later the band was on horseback and riding away in the direction of Richmond.

Dick told Marion of the adventure he and Bob had had with the band of mountain men the day before.

"I know that gang," said Marion; "it is known as the 'Blue Rock' gang. They are neither patriots nor loyalists, but merely a band of ruffians and desperadoes who make their living by robbing and plundering. I would like to run across them. We would wipe them off the face of the earth!"

His wish was to be gratified.

At just about noon the Swamp Fox's band came suddenly upon the gang in question.

The desperadoes were eating their noonday meal, and were not expecting an attack.

"Charge the scoundrels!" cried Marion, and he urged his horse forward at a gallop.

Dick and Bob kept right alongside the Swamp Fox.

They were eager to strike a blow at the men who had made prisoners of them, and then chased them when they were escaping.

The desperadoes uttered cries of fright, and leaped to their feet.

They fired a volley without taking time to take aim, and then fled.

"Fire!" cried Marion. "Give it to them!"

Crash! Roar!

The volley was fired.

A number of the fleeing desperadoes went down, dead or wounded.

The next moment Marion and his men were among the fleeing men, striking them down with swords and musket butts.

It was all over very quickly.

The timber was so close at hand that the men who were not at once shot or struck down succeeded in getting out of reach.

Marion was well satisfied, however.

He had dealt the gang a severe blow.

"It will teach them a lesson," he said, quietly.

The roughly dressed, nondescript-looking men who comprised Marion's band were terrors when it came to a fight.

"Say, they're all right, Dick!" said Bob, in a low, admiring tone of voice.

"So they are, Bob. They remind me of our own fellows."

"Just what I was thinking."

Marion gave the order to continue onward.

He did not pause to give any attention to the killed and wounded desperadoes.

"Their friends will return and look after them," he said.

Luckily, none of the Swamp Fox's men had been killed by the volley fired by the mountain men.

One or two had been slightly wounded, but this was thought nothing of.

They tied up their wounds as they rode along.

In Marion's band each man was his own surgeon.

That evening the band went into camp in the deep forest bordering on the James River, at a point about three miles above the city.

After supper had been eaten the Swamp Fox sent for Dick.

"Well, Dick," he said, when the youth appeared in the tent, "are you willing to undertake a dangerous errand?"

Dick nodded.

"I am," he replied, promptly.

Marion nodded, approvingly.

"That's the way I like to hear any one talk!" he said.

"No 'ifs' or 'ands' about it, but plain 'I am!'"

"I am always ready to attempt anything that may come up in the line of duty, sir," said Dick.

"Exactly; well, the commander-in-chief speaks in very complimentary terms of you and your friend, and says that if I wish any spy work done, you are the persons to put at the work."

"Then it is something in the line of spy work that you wish done, sir?"

"Yes; I wish to learn just how great a force of the British is occupying Richmond."

"I see; and you wish me to go to Richmond on a spying expedition?"

"I do, Dick."

"Very well; I will do so."

"And your friend Bob will accompany you?"

"Yes, I will take him along. We usually travel together."

"Very good."

"When shall we go?"

"To-night, if you wish."

"Very well; and now, what else do you wish to learn?"

"Whether or not there are any approaches to the city that are unguarded."

"I understand. We will look after that."

"Do so; and you will be back some time to-night?"

"If we can get away and have succeeded in securing the information; otherwise, I think it will be best to remain, don't you?"

"Yes; stay till you learn what you wish to know, as you



will be in less danger to stay than in going in and out more than once."

"So I think. Well, we will go at once."

Dick waited to receive a few final instructions, and then went in search of Bob.

"Are you ready for a little trip, Bob?" he asked.

"Of course I am," was Bob's prompt reply.

"I thought you would be."

"Where are you going, Dick?"

"To Richmond."

"I supposed as much. When are we going?"

"Right away."

"All right; I'm agreeable."

"Come along, then."

"How are we going, Dick? Horseback or on foot?"

"On horseback, Bob; we might want to get away in a hurry, you know."

"So we might; well, I'm ready if you are."

"I'm ready; come along."

The youths made their way to where their horses were tied.

It took but a few moments to saddle and bridle the animals.

Then Dick and Bob mounted and rode away.

Dick had learned that half a mile to the southward was a road leading to Richmond.

"We'll go slow till we reach the road, Bob," he said; "and then we can move at a faster gait."

It took them fifteen minutes to reach the road.

It was a well-defined thoroughfare, and the youths urged their horses forward at a gallop.

"It won't take long to reach Richmond, will it, Dick?" asked Bob.

"No; we should be there in half an hour or so."

Half an hour later they came in sight of the lights of the city.

"Now we'll have to go slow, and be careful, Bob," said Dick.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE REAPPEARANCE OF A FRIEND.

The youths slowed their horses to a walk.

They proceeded very cautiously.

They did not know at what moment they might run upon a sentinel.

The British might have every street guarded.

In that case it would be a dangerous thing to try to enter the city.

The youths were not to be deterred by danger, however.

They were inured to danger.

For the past two or three years they had been in constant danger.

They were veteran soldiers, young as they were.

Then, too, in pursuing their extra vocation as spies, they had encountered even greater dangers than when fighting for Liberty on the battlefields.

They were as brave as lions, but were not reckless.

They never took any unnecessary risks.

Slowly they rode forward.

At last they reached the edge of the city.

They headed into one of the streets and rode slowly along.

There were no street lamps so far out, and all was darkness.

The youths could just make out that there were occasional houses at the side of the street, and that was all.

They had proceeded perhaps three blocks in this fashion, without encountering any pickets, and were beginning to congratulate themselves that they were to enter the city unmolested, when suddenly upon the night air rose the challenge:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

The youths obeyed the command.

Reining their horses to a standstill, they waited.

Footsteps were heard approaching.

Then the dark forms of two men loomed up in front of the youths.

"Who are you?" asked one of the men, as the two came to a stop by the horses' heads.

"We live up country a ways," said Dick, "and we are going into the city on business."

"Humph! What are you, rebel or loyalist?"

"Loyalists," replied Dick, promptly.

He deemed it no sin to story to the redcoats.

All was fair, he was sure, in a case of this kind.

The two men hesitated.

They stepped back a few paces and held a brief conversation in low tones.

Then they again approached.

"You may pass on," said one.

"Very well, and thank you," said Dick.

The youths rode onward.

As soon as they were out of earshot of the redcoats they congratulated each other on their good luck in getting through without trouble.



"That was better than I expected," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Bob.

"We are within the confines of the city, now, and all we will have to do will be to exercise care and we will be all right."

"You are right, Dick."

A few minutes later the youths were riding along one of the main business streets.

"We'll hunt up a livery stable, and leave our horses there, Bob," said Dick; "we will be less likely to attract attention on foot than on horseback."

The youths soon found what they were looking for.

Leaving their horses, they made their way down the street, afoot.

The streets were thronged with people.

Lots of the citizens of the city were abroad, and there were also a great many British soldiers and officers.

Dick and Bob promenaded up and down the streets, and listened to the conversations of the people and of the redcoats.

In this way they picked up many bits of information.

Of course, the youths did not have on patriot uniforms.

They were dressed in rough suits of citizen's clothing.

On this account they felt that they were not in much danger.

No one would know, to look at them, that they were not citizens of Richmond.

This was what they thought.

They found out their mistake, however.

As they were walking along, paying no particular attention to their surroundings, they were suddenly given a start.

A voice, loud, sharp and threatening, cried out:

"There is Dick Slater, the rebel spy, as I live! Seize him! Don't let him get away!"

The youths looked up, quickly, to find themselves confronted by half a dozen redcoats.

It was one of these who had spoken.

They knew which one had spoken, because of the fact that he was pointing toward Dick.

"Great guns! we're in for it, Dick!" cried Bob.

"It looks like it," was the reply.

"Who is the fellow? Do you know him?"

Dick had given the face of the redcoat a searching scrutiny.

"No; I have never seen him before, that I know of," he replied.

"What are we going to do, surrender?"

"We'll see if we can fool them in some manner."

The conversation had been carried on under the youths' breath, and now the redcoats were close to them.

The redcoats had drawn their pistols and held the weapons extended, threatening the two.

"What does this mean?" asked Dick, quietly. "Why do you threaten us in this fashion?"

"Bah! you know, well enough, Dick Slater!" said the one who had called Dick by name in the first place.

"You are mistaken in two ways," said Dick, quietly.

"I am?"

The tone of the redcoat implied doubt.

"You are."

"Name the ways in which I am mistaken."

The redcoat fancied that the youths were in his power and that they could not escape, so he was not averse to parleying a bit.

"Well, in the first place you are mistaken in regard to the name which you have called me."

"I am?"

"Yes; it is not my name."

The redcoat laughed.

"You can't make me believe that, Dick Slater!" he said.

"I can't?"

"No; I know you too well."

"You do?"

"Yes; I have seen you several times, and I would know you anywhere."

Dick shook his head.

"You are mistaken," he said; "you have been fooled by a chance resemblance, doubtless."

The redcoat shook his head.

"Not at all!" he declared. "I know you only too well and while I cannot say the same of your companion, I would wager that I can call his name, also."

"You think so?"

"Yes; I have heard a great many stories regarding the doings of Dick Slater, and also of those of his partner Bob Estabrook. I would be willing to wager that your companion is Bob Estabrook."

Dick shook his head.

Although greatly surprised, and considerably put out by this unexpected recognition of himself and companion, Dick would not let the fact show on his face.

"You are mistaken as regards both of us," the youth said.

"Oh, of course, you would say that!"

"It is true; we are not the parties you say we are. Indeed, we never heard of the persons you mention."

The redcoat laughed, sneeringly.

"That will do to tell," he said.



"The truth will always do to tell," said Dick, calmly.  
 "Yes, but you are not telling it when you deny that you are Dick Slater, and that your companion is Bob Stabrook."

"I am; but, of course, it will be impossible to make you believe it."

"The last part of your statement is correct; and now please turn your backs toward us and put your hands behind your backs. You are our prisoners!"

"Not yet!" cried Dick.

Then he and Bob acted.

They were not disposed to submit to capture.

Dick did not doubt that there were others among the British in Richmond who would recognize him, and the result would be that he and Bob would be shot or hanged for spies.

It would not do, therefore, to submit to capture.

It would be much better to make a fight and take the chances of being shot in a scrimmage.

As Dick cried, "Not yet!" he and Bob leaped forward.

They ducked their heads, so as to get below the level of the muzzles of the threatening pistols.

Out shot their arms, with the strength of piston rods.

Their fists took a couple of the redcoats fair in the stomachs.

The fellows were doubled up like jack-knives.

They gave utterance to expressive grunts, and sat down with more force than dignity on the sidewalk.

Then the youths followed up their advantage.

Straightening up, quickly, they dealt several blows in rapid succession.

Down went the astonished redcoats, one after another, flat on the sidewalk.

Then the youths darted away, up the street.

There had been numerous witnesses of the unique combat, however.

Another party consisting of five or six redcoats tried to head the youths off.

The youths turned and darted diagonally across the street.

"Stop! Halt!" the redcoats cried. "Stop, or we will fire!"

By this time the fellows who had been felled by the blows from the youths' fists had scrambled to their feet and were coming in pursuit.

As might be expected, they were wild with rage.

"Don't let them get away!" they cried. "Shoot them! Kill the spies!"

Dick and Bob kept right on running.

They were aiming for a cross-street which intersected this one fifty yards ahead of them.

Suddenly the night air was broken by the sound of fire-arms.

The youths' pursuers had fired upon them.

An involuntary cry of pain escaped the lips of Bob. He did not fall or stop running, however.

"Are you badly hurt, Bob?" asked Dick, anxiously.

"No; a wound in the arm, that is all, Dick. Don't worry about me. Keep right on going. We'll get away from the scoundrels yet!"

"All right; now run down this street with all your might, Bob."

They had reached the cross-street.

They darted down the street.

As they did so their pursuers fired another volley.

Luckily, however, none of the bullets took effect this time.

The street they were now on sloped downward.

This made it an easy matter to run at good speed.

Their pursuers received the same benefit from gravity, however, so it was no particular advantage to them.

When they had gone in this direction about four blocks, the youths suddenly found themselves on the bank of the James River.

They came to a stop, quickly.

"Jove! a little more and we would have got a ducking, Dick," said Bob. "Which way shall we go now?"

"This way," said Dick.

He turned to the right, and, closely followed by Bob, made his way along the river bank.

The youths had gained somewhat upon their pursuers who were now more than a block behind.

When the youths reached the next street they found that their enemies had played a trick on them.

The pursuing redcoats, knowing that the river lay in front of the fugitives, had divided into three parties.

While one party kept straight on in pursuit of the youths, the other two separated from it, one going to the right, the other to the left.

These two parties had gone to the next streets running parallel to the one the youths were on, and had turned down these.

As a consequence, when Dick and Bob reached the next street they saw a party of their enemies coming down upon them.

"Jove! there's another gang, Dick!" exclaimed Bob. "I guess we're in for it now!"

"It looks like it, Bob; we'll have to get back. Quick, come with me."



Dick whirled and ran back in the direction from which they had just come.

Bob kept close at his heels.

The second party of redcoats had seen them, however, and set up a yell of triumph.

"You haven't got us yet," murmured Dick, grimly. "This way, Bob."

As Dick spoke, he leaped over a fence and ran across a vacant lot, Bob following closely.

The redcoats discovered what the fugitives had done and, whirling around, ran back with the intention of heading the youths off at the next street.

Dick and Bob were too swift for them, however, and they reached the next street and got across it while yet their pursuers were fifty yards distant on either side.

Dick and Bob were headed for an alley, but just before they reached it the front door of the house bordering on the alley suddenly opened and a voice cried:

"In here, quick!"

The youths darted through the open doorway and the door was shut, instantly, and the bolts were shot into place.

"Come with me," said a voice, and a hand took hold of Dick's arm.

"Take your companion by the hand," the voice exclaimed.

Dick did so.

Then the three moved along the hall, up a flight of stairs and a few steps along another hall.

A door opened and the three entered a lighted room, a sort of library.

The youths looked at their new-found friend and a simultaneous cry of amazement escaped them.

"Mary Draper!"

Such was the exclamation which burst from their lips.

It was indeed the strange, beautiful girl who had set them free when they were prisoners in the stronghold of the mountain men.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ALMOST TRAPPED.

The girl smiled in a sad manner.

"Yes, it is I, Mary Draper," she said.

"How comes it we find you here in Richmond?" asked Dick.

"This is the home of my uncle," the girl replied.

"Oh, that is it?"

"Yes. My father is here. He is wounded, and I am nursing him."

"Ah!"

At this instant there came the sound of pounding on the door below.

The girl started, and turned pale.

"The redcoats must have seen us enter the house," said Dick.

"I fear so," the girl replied.

"In that case, you will be in trouble. You had better conduct us to a door at the rear and let us continue our flight."

"There is a room in the attic where you will, I think be safe. Come with me, and I will show you the way."

The youths followed the girl out of the room.

She carried a candle, and led the way along the hall and up a narrow flight of stairs into the attic.

At first glance the attic seemed to be one large, unfinished room, but the girl unhesitatingly approached the seeming side of the house, and after feeling about for few moments, pressed on what was evidently a secret spring, and a panel slid back, disclosing a dark aperture.

"Enter!" the girl said. "Take the candle. I think you will be safe here."

Dick took the candle, and he and Bob stepped through the opening.

The girl closed the panel after them.

The youths found themselves in a narrow compartment not more than three feet wide.

It extended clear across the width of the attic, and the youths saw that the hall-like compartment extended clear around the attic.

"This beats anything I ever saw!" said Bob, staring at the amazement.

"It is rather an odd arrangement," agreed Dick; "but it comes in handy now, however, and I judge that it has been used in emergencies more than once."

"I don't doubt it. But say, Dick, do you suppose the girl will keep the secret of our hiding place?"

"Without a doubt, Bob."

Bob looked thoughtful.

"I guess you are right," he observed; "she set us free the other night, when we were in the hands of her own father, so I guess she won't betray us into the hands of our enemies, who are nothing to her."

"You may be sure she won't, Bob."

Presently footsteps were heard and voices.

"I tell you, they came into this house!" said a loud angry voice. "I saw them, and they must be here, somewhere."



It was the voice of one of the redcoats who had been pursuing Dick and Bob.

"I cannot think that you are right," came the reply, in a calm, masculine voice. "I don't see how any one could have entered my house without my knowledge."

"They did enter, I am sure, and I think they are concealed in here, somewhere."

"If so, we should find them. You have already looked everywhere below without success, however, and now you can look in the attic. I think you will have the same success there that you have had below."

"That must be Mary's uncle," whispered Bob. Dick nodded.

"I judge so," he replied. Then he blew out the light, leaving himself and comrade in darkness.

"There might be a crack in the partition, through which the light might shine and betray us," he explained in a whisper.

"True," replied Bob; "it is best to be on the safe side." They listened and knew when the men reached the attic. They could hear all that was said, as plainly, almost, as though the men were right beside them.

The partition was simply a thin, wooden affair. It was well-fitted, however, and it would take a close search to discover that it was a partition, and not the wall of the house.

Suddenly the youths were given a start.

One of the redcoats had remarked, in a disappointed tone of voice:

"Well, they're not here, sure enough!" and it was the reply to this remark, in the voice of the man the youths supposed to be Mary's uncle, that gave them the start. What the man said was:

"There's a secret compartment here; you can look in that, if you like."

"Great guns!" whispered Bob. "We're in for it now!"

"A secret compartment!" exclaimed the redcoat. "Where is it?"

"I'll show you!" in the voice of the uncle. "Here, hold the candle. There's a secret spring which operates the panel."

"I think the man is very foolish for revealing the secret to the redcoats," thought Dick.

Then, as he heard a fumbling sound at the panel, he took Bob by the hand and pulled him slowly and gently along the narrow compartment, toward the corner.

"It is a slim chance, but we'll make the most of it," he whispered. "They may not take the trouble to explore the passage all the way around."

The youths slowly worked their way on around, till they were on the opposite side of the attic from the side where the sliding panel was located.

As they reached this point there came an exclamation of satisfaction in the tone of the man they supposed was Mary's uncle, and exclamations of amazement from the redcoats.

The man had succeeded in opening the secret panel!

"Now, if those fellows are in here we'll soon snake them out!" cried one of the redcoats, in a boisterous tone of voice.

"Two of you go one way, and two the other," ordered the redcoat who seemed to be in authority; "if they are in there you will have them between two fires. If they are there, they are certainly in a trap."

And this seemed to be the case.

Dick and Bob felt that they were in a snare.

They did not see how they were to escape.

It seemed that escape would be impossible.

In less than a minute they would be threatened from both sides.

They could show fight, of course, but that could only result in one way—their death.

No matter how many of the redcoats they might kill, there would be others to take their places, and there would have to be an end to the affair.

And if they killed any of the redcoats it would make their death absolutely sure.

If they did not show fight they might not be shot or hung immediately, and they would have a chance to escape.

Of course, being in the attic, the roof was close above the youths' head.

Mechanically Dick reached up and felt of the sloping roof.

An exclamation came near escaping him.

His hand had enabled him to discover the existence of a trap-door.

"I might have known that here would be a trap-door!" thought Dick. "There is always one in the roof of every house. Now, if I can get it open and we can get out on the roof before those fellows get around here."

A moment's examination with his fingers enabled Dick to find the hooks which held the trap-door in place.

To unhook them and lift the trap-door took but a moment of time.

Bob had discovered what his comrade was doing.

He was delighted.

They might escape, after all!

"Climb through, quick, Bob!" whispered Dick. "I will follow!"



Bob obeyed.

He knew there was no time to argue regarding who should go first.

He climbed quickly up through the opening.

He was careful and made but little noise.

Dick listened eagerly.

He could hear the men coming along the passage, at the sides, and knew the fellows would soon be where they could see him, if he did not get through the trap-door in time.

He hastened to get up through the opening.

As he turned to replace the trap-door, he saw the light from the candles held by the redcoats shining in the passage he had just left.

He congratulated himself that he had not been seen.

While he was yet doing this, a wild yell escaped the lips of one of the redcoats.

"They are here!" he cried. "They are up on the roof!"

Dick slammed the trap-door shut, with an exclamation of dismay.

"Too bad, Dick!" said Bob. "We're in for it now."

"I guess you are right, Bob. We are trapped nicely, I judge."

"Maybe not," said Bob, in a hopeful tone; "perhaps we shall be able to escape yet."

"We'll keep on trying, anyway, Bob!"

There came several loud thumps on the under side of the trap-door.

"Open the door and come down!" cried a voice. "We have you in a trap, and you cannot escape. Come down!"

Dick made no reply.

Then the men pushed up on the trap-door.

Dick and Bob sat on the door, and their combined weight was too great for the redcoats to lift.

"Get off the door or we'll fire through it, and that will be bad for you!" cried one of the men, angrily.

"That is a game two can play at!" replied Dick, promptly. "We will fire through the door, too, and some of you will get bullets in your precious carcasses!"

"You might as well give up and surrender," was the reply; "if you attempt to resist, it will be the worse for you."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" retorted Dick.

He spoke bravely, but he could not but acknowledge to himself that the chances of himself and companion escaping were very slim.

Still he was far from thinking of giving up and surrendering.

Again the redcoats tried to push the trap-door open.

This time they succeeded in lifting it several inches.

Dick understood matters.

Some more of the redcoats had come to their assistance and it looked as if they might succeed in forcing the door open in spite of all the youths could do.

The youths rose to their feet and jumped up and down on the trap-door.

By so doing they succeeded in forcing it back down.

The sounds of cursing came to their ears.

The redcoats were very angry.

The fact was that one of their number had got his fingers pinched when the trap-door went down, and he was cursing at a great rate.

"Open that door and come down here or it will be the worse for you!" cried one of the men.

"Not yet!" replied Dick. "We are better satisfied where we are."

More cursing was heard.

Then of a sudden the sound of pistol shots rang in the youths' ears.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

Bullets came tearing their way up through the not too solidly made trap-door.

The bullets came dangerously near to Dick and Bob.

In truth, one missile grazed Dick's arm.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Bob. "This is getting a bit warm, Dick!"

"You are right, Bob. What shall we do?"

"I give it up."

"Let's repay them in their own coin."

"You mean give them some shots? All right!"

The youths drew their pistols and fired four shots down through the trap-door.

A wild howl of pain and rage came up from below.

"I guess we hit some one!" chuckled Bob.

"It certainly sounds that way, Bob."

The youths proceeded to reload their pistols.

Every moment they expected to hear more pistol shots, and the sing of bullets.

## CHAPTER IX.

### DARING WORK.

They were happily disappointed, however.

The redcoats did not fire another volley.

Perhaps they did not wish to goad the youths to retaliating with more pistol shots.



When the youths had succeeded in reloading their pistols, Dick said to Bob:

"You remain here and hold the trap-door shut, if possible; fire upon the rascals, if necessary."

"All right. And you?"

"I am going to see if I can find a way to get down from here."

"I hope you will succeed."

"So do I."

The point where the youths were was at the extreme top of the house.

It was a sort of platform about eight feet square, and was covered with tin; a low wooden railing extended around the edge of the platform.

Dick stepped to the edge of the platform and climbed over the railing.

He made his way slowly down the sloping roof.

At the bottom was a ledge eight or ten inches in width. In this ledge was a gutter.

Dick followed this gutter to the corner.

In the alley directly below him he heard the sounds of redcoats' voices.

"It wouldn't do to get down at this corner, anyway," said Dick to himself; "I'll go on to the next corner."

Dick moved across to the corner on the opposite side from the alley in which were the redcoats.

Dick made an examination with his hands.

An exclamation of satisfaction escaped him.

He had found what he had hoped to find.

A wooden water-pipe extended downward along the side of the building and fastened to it by strong iron bands.

The water-pipe evidently extended to a cistern, and Dick felt confident that it would be possible to climb down the water-pipe and reach the ground.

He called to Bob.

"This way, quick, Bob!" he cried, in a cautious voice.

A moment later he saw the form of his comrade at the railing above.

Bob climbed over the railing and made his way cautiously down toward where his comrade stood.

At the moment that he reached the spot, there came the clatter of the trap-door as it was forced open.

The redcoats had discovered the fact that the youths had abandoned their post on the door.

"Quick, follow me, Bob!" said Dick, in a low voice.

"Go ahead; I'll be right after you, old man!"

Dick dropped upon his knees, seized the wooden water-pipe, and, swinging himself over the edge of the roof, began descending.

Bob followed just as quickly as possible.

Not quickly enough to escape observation, however.

One of the redcoats had leaped up through the opening onto the platform and had looked down just in time to see Bob as he swung himself over the edge of the roof.

The redcoat whipped out a pistol and fired.

He was too hasty, however.

He did not stop to take aim, and the result was that he missed the escaping fugitive.

The bullet whistled past Bob's ear, within half an inch of it, however, and had it not been that the youth had nerves of steel he would undoubtedly have lost his hold and fallen to the ground, thirty feet below.

Both Dick and Bob, however, had long since got over being startled by such things.

A miss was as good as a mile, to their minds, and they had to be actually hurt before they gave any sign.

The next instant, and before the redcoat could fire a second shot, Bob's head disappeared below the edge of the roof.

The redcoat quickly informed his companions regarding what was taking place, and there was a hurried exit from the attic.

The fellows wished to get downstairs and out of doors in time to have a hand in capturing or killing the daring "rebel" spies—for such they believed the youths to be.

It required strong arms and a tight grip to enable the youths to make their way down the water-pipe slowly.

The tendency was to slip down at a rapid rate.

And when they reached the lower story of the house the youths did increase the speed of their descent, and they shot down the remaining distance very quickly.

They had expected that some of the redcoats would be there, ready to pounce upon them, but were pleasantly disappointed.

They did not see a single redcoat.

They had not yet got downstairs, and those who were out in the street and alley did not know that the fugitives were descending.

The youths were on the point of darting away when a door at the rear of the house opened and a voice which they recognized as being Mary Draper's, cried, in a cautious undertone:

"Come in here, quick!"

The youths did not hesitate.

They darted past the girl and into the house in an instant.

They realized that this was the safest thing that they could do.

The redcoats would naturally think the youths had run away from the vicinity, and would run in pursuit.



They would not think that the fugitives would dare re-enter the house from which they had just been chased.

The instant the youths were in the house the girl closed the door, being very careful to make no noise in doing so.

She shot the bolt, thus making it impossible for the door to be suddenly opened from the outside, thus taking them by surprise.

Then the sound of excited voices was heard, and the hurrying of feet just outside.

The redcoats had got around to the rear of the house, and were looking for the fugitives.

"They are surprised at not seeing us," whispered Bob, with a chuckle.

"Yes, they think we have made good speed in getting away," replied Dick.

"Listen!" whispered the girl.

They did so.

They could hear a good portion of what was said.

The redcoats seemed very much at fault.

They could not understand how it was that the youths had disappeared so suddenly.

Some went running away, in the hope that they might get sight of the fugitives.

"Maybe the fellows got back into the house," suggested one of the redcoats.

The hearts of the three listeners almost stood still as they awaited the reply of the redcoat addressed.

"Nonsense! They would not venture back in the house," said a sneering voice; "they are getting away from this vicinity just as fast as they can, and you can bet on it!"

The three breathed freer.

"Good for you, my redcoat friend!" murmured Bob. "I'm glad you think thus."

"Do you think all the redcoats are out of the house, Miss Mary?" asked Dick, in a whisper.

"I think so," was the reply; "if you wait here I will go and see and make sure."

"Very well; we will wait."

The girl glided away and was gone perhaps ten minutes.

Then she returned and announced that the coast was clear.

"They have all left the house," she said; "but it will be unsafe for you to venture forth for some time. Come with me and I will introduce you to my uncle. He did not know I had let you into the house, in the first place, and unwittingly exposed you to great danger by showing the redcoats the secret hiding place in the attic. Come, and he will be glad to see you and will bid you welcome."

The girl led the way along the hall.

The youths followed, and were ushered into a large sitting-room, near the front of the house.

The room was lighted by a couple of candles, but window-shades were tightly drawn, so there was no danger of any one seeing in from the outside.

A man came forward to meet them.

He was a well-dressed, fairly good-looking man of perhaps forty-five years.

"Uncle, these are the young men I was telling you of," the girl said.

The man greeted the youths cordially, and shook hands with them.

"I am sorry I caused you so much trouble a while ago through telling of the secret hiding place in the attic," the man said; "had I known you were there I should have refrained from revealing it. I am sorry."

"Don't mention it," said Dick, quietly; "it has turned out all right, after all. We are safe now, I think."

"Yes, I judge so; the redcoats will hardly take it into their heads to make another search of the house."

"I hardly think so."

The man motioned toward some chairs.

"Be seated," he said; "you might as well take it easy."

The youths took the seats indicated.

The girl took a seat also, and all four became engaged in conversation.

The youths learned to their satisfaction that the man was a patriot.

He was glad to be of assistance in aiding the youths escaping from the redcoats.

Dick and Bob thanked Mary for what she had done for them.

The girl modestly said that she had not done much.

"Do you think, then, that saving our lives was doing much?" said Dick, with a smile.

"Oh, I did not mean it that way," said the girl, blushing.

They had not been talking but a few minutes when there came a loud rapping at the front door.

"Jove! the scoundrels haven't all gone away yet," murmured Bob.

Mary turned pale.

Her uncle rose to his feet.

"Remain here and keep quiet," he said; "I will go and send them about their business."

"But suppose they insist on coming in?" said Dick.

"They won't do so."

The man's tone and air were confident.

He left the room, closing the door behind him.

He made his way to the front door and unlocked and opened it.



as he had expected, four or five redcoats stood there. "Well," he said, "what do you want now?" "We thought we would look through your house again, if you have no objections," said one of the redcoats. "Look through my house again!" "Yes." "For what purpose?" "To see if we can find those rebel spies." "Why, you looked through once and drove them out away." "I know we did." "Then why do you wish to look through the house again?" "We thought that they might have come back in." "Impossible!" "Well, let us look through, anyway." "I tell you they are not here." "Perhaps they are not, but we will be better satisfied after we have made search." "It would be a waste of time; they are not here. You have searched the house once, and that is enough." "You had better let us look through." "No." "Why not?" "I have been bothered enough for one night." "You had better let us look through!" said the redcoat, in a rather threatening tone. "You must admit that it was under a suspicious circumstance, the finding of the rebels hidden in your attic." "And you must admit that had I not told you of the secret hiding place in the attic, you would not have found the rebels. If I had wished to protect and harbor them, I could not have disclosed the secret of their hiding place, could I?" "No, I guess not," reluctantly. "Of course I wouldn't; they got into the house unknown to me." "Maybe they have done so again." "No; when they first entered, the front door was not locked, since that time all of the doors have been locked and bolted. They could not have got back into the house." "Maybe not, but I would like to make sure of it by looking for them." "You can't do it to-night; I've been bothered enough." The redcoats turned and reluctantly walked away, stumbling as they went. The owner of the house watched them for a few moments and then closed and bolted the door. They seemed determined to come in," he said on re-

turning to the sitting-room, "but I finally got them started away."

"We heard the conversation," said Dick; "I am afraid we may be the means of getting you into trouble."

"Not at all; I'm not afraid. And now that you two young men are here, you might as well stay all night."

It was open-handed Southern hospitality, and the youths could not refuse.

They were shown to a large, pleasant room on the second floor and were soon in bed and sleeping as soundly as though they had not only a few hours before been chased by bloodthirsty enemies.

## CHAPTER X.

### BACK IN THE CAMP OF THE "SWAMP FOX."

Next morning the youths took breakfast at the home of Mary Draper's uncle.

Then, after thanking both for their kindness, the youths took their departure.

They knew they were taking chances by appearing on the streets of Richmond in the daytime, but they were willing to take the risk.

There was much that they wished to learn.

They could only acquire the information which they wished to acquire by circulating and looking around them.

They put in the most of the day at this.

By judicious inquiries put to people who it was thought would not be given to suspicion, the youths succeeded in getting a good idea regarding the number of British in Richmond.

By visiting the main streets, at the ends where the city ended and the country began, the youths were enabled to learn how well the approaches to the city were guarded.

They met with no one who knew them or even who seemed to regard them with suspicion, and the youths began to feel safe.

As is usually the case, this was the time when they were in the most danger.

As they were walking down the main street, they suddenly found themselves confronted by a little band of redcoats.

"There they are!" cried one of the redcoats. "That one is Dick Slater, the rebel spy, and the other one is another rebel, you may be sure! Grab them! Don't let them escape, this time!"

Dick and Bob had been taken completely by surprise,



but they had no intention of allowing themselves to be captured.

Turning, they raced back down the street.

After them, pell-mell, came the redcoats.

The latter were yelling at the top of their voices, telling the youths to stop or they would be fired upon.

The youths paid no attention whatever to the commands to stop.

They were determined to escape.

A couple of redcoats, who got in their path and tried to stop the youths, were knocked down, and onward the fugitives sped.

The pursuing redcoats, seeing that they were not matches for the fugitives in so far as speed was concerned, decided to do as they had threatened.

"Out with your pistols!" roared the leader.

The men obeyed.

Dick and Bob heard the command.

They glanced back and saw that the redcoats had drawn their weapons.

"They are going to fire, Dick!" said Bob.

"Yes, Bob."

"There's a dozen of them. They are likely to put a bullet or two in us."

"We'll play the old trick on them, Bob."

"What is that?"

"When the leader says, 'Fire!' we will drop to the sidewalk."

"Ah, yes, I see. All right."

At this instant the sharp command of the redcoat leader was heard:

"Fire!"

Down upon the sidewalk on their faces went the youths.

At the same instant the sound of pistol shots rose on the air.

Crack! crack! crack! crack!

A wild yell of delight went up from the redcoats.

"We've got them!" was the cry. "We fixed them, that time!"

But they were wrong, and their cries of delight and triumph were quickly changed to yells of anger and disappointment as the supposed dead "rebels" leaped to their feet and continued their flight with undiminished speed.

Too late, the redcoats understood that a trick had been played on them.

They set out in pursuit once more, but the youths had got a good lead, and were able to not only maintain, but to increase it.

The youths encountered a great many people as they ran onward, but the people were not disposed to interfere.

They were quite willing to get out of the way, and stand and watch the chase.

The youths had a well-defined course of action mapped out.

They increased their lead till they thought they were safe, and then they headed toward the livery stable where they had left their horses.

Instead of going straight to the stable, however, they went around onto the street back of the stable.

Their pursuers had not yet turned the corner.

The youths leaped the fence, raced across the lot and approached the stable from the rear.

They made their way around the building, and appearing suddenly, ordered that their horses be saddled and bridled.

The redcoats who had been in pursuit of the youths turned the corner on the back street and paused in wonder.

The fugitives were nowhere to be seen.

They did not know what to think.

They could not understand how it was that the fugitives had disappeared so suddenly.

It did not take the hostler long to saddle and bridle the horses.

Dick and Bob paid the score and mounted while still inside the stable.

Then they rode out upon the street.

As they did so, a wild yell went up.

It came from up the street a ways.

The youths glanced in that direction.

The band of redcoats was there.

"There they are!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes, but we can bid them defiance now!"

"So we can."

The youths urged their horses to a gallop, and turning in their saddles, waved their hands.

"Good-by!" cried Bob. "We'll see you again at some other time. Farewell!"

Angry yells went up from the baffled redcoats.

"Oh, yell, you redcoated rascals!" chuckled Bob, "I guess it will make you feel better, and will do us no harm!"

"We are all right now, Bob, I think," said Dick.

"Yes, we know which way to go in order to get out of the city without having to pass any sentinels."

But the youths were not to escape so easily, after all.

As they approached the point where the city ended and the country began, they came upon a party of redcoats.

The redcoats were mounted, and were coming toward the youths.

The youths were somewhat taken aback.



They did not slacken the speed of their horses, however. They knew that to do so would at once arouse the suspicions of their enemies.

It would be better to ride rapidly onward and trust to luck to enable them to get past the redcoats without being stopped.

In a jiffy they were face to face with their enemies.

The youths rode out to one side, as if to go around the redcoats.

The latter were not disposed to let the youths pass unchallenged, however.

"Halt!" cried the commander of the party. "Stop, or we will fire upon you!"

The redcoats had drawn pistols at the words of their commander.

Dick and Bob made great pretensions of trying to rein in their horses, and did get them almost stopped, but not till they were half way around the party of redcoats.

The action of the youths threw the redcoats off their guard, however.

They thought the youths were going to stop.

The thought that the two would dare try to get around them and away, did not come to them.

They allowed the hands holding the pistols to drop carelessly by their sides.

Some even returned the weapons to their belts.

But they were quickly treated to a surprise.

Just as they thought the youths were going to bring their horses to a full stop, the youths drove the spurs into the flanks of the animals.

Astonished and pained by the action of their riders, the horses leaped wildly forward, giving utterance to wild snorts.

This action on the youths' part had been entirely unexpected by the redcoats, and they were, for a few moments, rendered incapable of action.

They sat their horses, seemingly temporarily paralyzed.

By the time they recovered from their surprise, the youths had got clear around them, and were speeding up the road at a great rate.

"Quick, after them!" yelled the commander of the party of redcoats. "They are undoubtedly rebels! We must not let them escape! After them!"

The redcoats whirled their horses, and spurred in pursuit of the fleeing youths.

They uttered wild yells.

What good they thought they would accomplish by this is hard to say.

If they thought to frighten the fugitives, they made a bad mistake, and wasted a lot of breath.

Words or yells would not frighten the "Liberty Boys."

But, of course, the pursuing redcoats did not know the two fugitives were members of the famous company of "Liberty Boys."

They supposed the youths were ordinary "rebels."

It became an exceedingly lively chase.

The youths were perhaps fifty yards in the lead when the chase began.

This was still within pistol shot.

At least the redcoats thought they might be able to bring down the fugitives by well-directed shots, and they began firing.

Had they been expert pistol shots—which they were not—they would have had hard work hitting the youths, as it is an extremely difficult thing to do good shooting when riding a galloping horse.

The youths knew that, although they were within pistol shot distance of their pursuers, it would be only a chance if they were hit.

Of course, an accidental shot might kill one of them, but they were not the youths to stop for fear of an accidental shot.

They urged their horses onward.

To the youths' satisfaction they found that they were gradually drawing away from their pursuers.

Their horses were fresh, while the redcoats had probably ridden some distance and their horses were more or less tired.

The bullets kept zipping past the youths, however, and this was not pleasant.

A stray shot might kill or seriously wound one of them.

Still, as there was no help for it, the youths simply set their teeth and kept grimly on.

Presently they got beyond pistol shot distance of their pursuers, and then they breathed more freely.

"I guess we're all right now, Dick," said Bob.

"I think so, Bob," was the reply.

"Yes; their horses are not so good as ours, and we will soon be so far ahead of them that they will give up the pursuit."

"I hope so."

This proved to be the case.

The redcoats gave up the chase when they had followed a distance of a couple of miles and had fallen behind, nearly half a mile.

They saw that they would be unable to overtake the fugitives.

Bob, who was watching, saw them turn back.

"They've given it up, Dick," he said.

Dick looked back over his shoulder.



"Yes, they are going back," he said; "well, I am not sorry."

"Neither am I."

"I don't fancy this thing of being chased by a band of bloodthirsty redcoats."

"Nor I. Well, I guess we won't be bothered any more, now."

"I think not."

The youths rode steadily onward.

When they reached the point nearest to the camp of the Swamp Fox, they left the road and entered the timber.

They had some difficulty on finding the camp, but finally succeeded.

As soon as they had unsaddled and unbridled their horses and tied them, the youths went to the tent occupied by the Swamp Fox.

"Well, you got back safely," Marion remarked, as he shook hands with the youths.

"Yes," replied Dick.

"What success did you have?"

"The best."

"Ah, I'm glad of that. You learned how many of the British there are in Richmond?"

"Yes—that is, approximately."

"Of course; it would be impossible to learn the exact number."

Then Dick placed the Swamp Fox in possession of all the information which he had secured.

Marion listened with interest.

When Dick had finished the Swamp Fox nodded his head.

"Good!" he said. "You have done well. The information which you have secured will be of great value to me."

"I am glad," said Dick; "and if we can be of any further use to you, please let us know."

"I shall do so; but matters have come up since you left here and went to Richmond, which makes it necessary that I should send a message to the commander-in-chief, and if you will take the message for me, I shall be much obliged."

"We shall be only too glad to do so, sir."

"I thought you would be."

"When will the message be ready?"

"I will write it to-night, and you may start early in the morning."

"Very well, sir."

The youths then saluted and withdrew from the tent.

"A couple of brave youths!" murmured Marion, as soon as the two had left the tent.

Then he seated himself on a camp-stool, and, with saddle for a table, began writing.

He wrote steadily for half an hour.

"There; that will do, I guess," he murmured, after had read what he had written.

Then he folded the paper, sealed it and placed it in his saddle-bag for safe keeping.

Immediately after breakfast was over next morning Dick and Bob presented themselves at the tent.

Marion greeted them pleasantly.

"Have you the message ready?" asked Dick.

"Yes, it is ready, Dick."

Then Marion drew the document out of the saddle-bag and handed it to Dick.

"Take good care of it and place it in the hands of our commander-in-chief himself, my boy."

Dick nodded.

"I will do so, sir," he said.

"And if you should be captured by the redcoats, be sure that it does not fall into their hands. Destroy it first."

"I will do so."

"Very well; and now, good-by, and God speed!"

"Good-by, sir!"

Marion shook hands with both youths, and then went out from the tent, mounted their horses and rode away toward the north.

They were out of sight in the timber almost immediately, and as they disappeared the Swamp Fox murmured:

"Ah, if we had more men like those 'Liberty boys'!"

## THE END.

The next number (42) of "The Liberty Boys of America" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' BRAVE REDEEMER; OR, IN THE NICK OF TIME," by Harry Moore.

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